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ABSTRACT

There are approximately 170 indigenous languages spoken in Brazil, by a population of about 200,000. Language policy regarding these communities has not been well defined or explicit. Through several changes of constitution, only Portuguese has been considered the national and official language. Only recently has the government begun to develop a formal policy giving justice to linguistic minorities. Bilingual education for Indians and the right to maintain native languages were ensured in 1966. Instruction in native languages was established in 1973. However, this policy has not been widely implemented. Two viewpoints emerge in the literature: (1) that the native language should be used for development of first language skills, and (2) that Portuguese should be the medium of instruction. There is no consensus about language choice. The result is that in practice, bilingual education in Brazil is either transitional or mingled with the literacy process, in which both languages are used simultaneously for a brief time. Independent bilingual education projects have adopted Freirean methodology and support cultural pluralism and indigenous autonomy. There is evidence that these independent efforts, while purporting to be pluralistic, are actually assimilative in orientation. A 40-item bibliography is included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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(Bi)literacy and empowerment: education for indigenous groups in Brazil[1]

Ana Chacoff

This paper examines the history of language policy in Brazil, the question of a national language, and their effect on indigenous language education projects, specifically bilingual education. Independent "Freirean" educational projects are analyzed according to the standard models of bilingual education: transitional, maintenance, and enrichment. A case is made that the goals of these projects might ultimately be more assimilationist than pluralistic.

Les blancs debarquent. Le canon! Il fault se soumettre au bapteme, s'habiller, travailler [The Whites get off the boat. The canon! (The Indians) must be baptized, dressed, and put to work.]. --Rimbaud (1983:63)

The field of sociolinguistics has led teachers and researchers of language to raise questions which go beyond purely structural linguistics and see language as a sociocultural phenomenon. There has been a change of gears towards consideration of non-standard varieties and towards the ethnic minority groups who use them. The recent international concern about linguistic/cultural genocide resulting from cultural contact between two unequal societies has generated an increase in language attitude studies.

The development of public-sponsored bilingual schooling is a direct response to linguistic diversity. While I was reading the literature on bilingual education in the United States, questions came to mind regarding language diversity and language planning in my home, Brazil: Wasn't Brazil a monolingual country? Didn't the whole country speak Brazilian Portuguese? Was there bilingual education in Brazil? Wasn't it the case that the Indians who were integrated spoke Portuguese and those who were isolated spoke their own languages and did not need Portuguese? Did Brazilian public schools offer bilingual education? I came to realize that I did not know much about the subject and decided to discover the answer to these questions.[2]

Language Policy

Today there are about 170 indigenous languages spoken in Brazil and the indigenous population who speaks those languages is about 200,000. Only 13% of

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these language groups have more than 1,000 speakers and 25% have fewer than 100 speakers. This troublesome matter is worthy of consideration because according to linguists a language needs to have at least 5,000 speakers in order to survive. In Brazil only 8 indigenous languages (Guarani, Guajajara, Xavante, Makuxi, Terena, Tukano, Yanomani, and Tikuna) fall into this category (Rodrigues, 1988).

The language policy carried out by the Brazilian government since independence (1822) has not been well-defined or explicit regarding these non-Portuguese-speaking communities. Instead, the government seems to have followed the colonial policy carried out by the Marquess of Pombal (minister of Portugal in the 18th century) with Portuguese as the language of the urban centers and of political power. According to Rodrigues (1981), during that time Pombal implemented a very strict language policy by imposing the spread of Portuguese as a way of guaranteeing the territorial conquest. Pombal believed the Jesuits were hindering the process of land demarcation in which the maintenance of Tupi-Guarani, the language of the major indigenous group then, was also a hindrance. Therefore, speaking the indigenous language was prohibited and the Jesuits were expelled from Brazil in 1756. Because the Jesuits had learned Tupi-Guarani in order to communicate with the natives and convert them, Tupi-Guarani had been competing with Portuguese. With the expulsion of Jesuits by Pombal, Portuguese overtook Tupi-Guarani and a nationalist trend was in motion.

Throughout the several changes the Constitution of Brazil has undergone, only Portuguese has been considered the national and official language. Both the imperial and the republican governments have maintained an attitude of indifference towards the linguistic minority groups. During strong nationalist times, there have been strict measures which were very similar to those used by the Marquess of Pombal in the 18th century. For example, during World War II, the federal government prohibited the use of Italian, Japanese and German by closing their schools, stopping the publication of their magazines and newspapers and even prohibiting the immigrants themselves from speaking their native languages (Rodrigues, 1981).

Bilingual Education

The government only recently started to develop a formal policy in a direction that would give justice to linguistic minorities. The starting point was the Presidential Act of 1966 (Law 58.824) which ensured bilingual education for Indians and the right to maintain their own languages. In 1973 FUNAI (the Brazilian

National Indian Foundation) established that "The instruction of Indians should be done in the language of the group to which they belong, as well as in Portuguese, safe-guarding the former" (Law 6.001 - Dec. 19, 1973 - Indian Statute, cited in Rodrigues, 1981 and Vandresen, 1986).

Nevertheless, although public-sponsored bilingual education is law, it has not been put into practice in public schools where education has been exclusively in Standard Portuguese (Meliá, 1979; Rodrigues, 1981, 1988; Vandresen, 1986). Indeed, it was only last year that federal universities in the south of Brazil began to implement the first public-sponsored bilingual education program for immigrant children in all Brazil (Eliane Luz 1988, personal communication). With respect to indigenous groups, attempts at bilingual education programs have been part of scholars' academic discussions and have been promoted as 'alternative' projects developed through the enthusiasm and effort of a few individuals (indigenists, missionaries and university professors).[3]

A Questão da Educação Indígena (The Question of Education for Indians) (Comissão Pró-Indio, 1981) is a collection of fourteen educators' reports addressing the issue of education for Indians in the north, south and mid-west of Brazil. They were presented at "The First National Meeting about Education for Indians" in São Paulo in 1979. The reports are not detailed ethnographic studies, nor thorough analyses of degrees of bilingualism among different indigenous groups, nor typological studies of bilingual education programs that have been developed in Brazil. Instead, what emerges from them is a series of themes and problems evolving out of the teachers' practice and related to the scholars' academic discussions, three of which will be discussed here: 1) bilingual education and the issue of language choice as medium of instruction, 2) the role and function of schooling, and 3) the need to listen to Indians' educational concerns.

Bilingual education and the issue of language choice

In the United States, bilingual schooling is viewed as a means of remedying inequality in educational opportunity for students of no or limited English-language proficiency (minority language groups). A child who comes to school with a home language other than English cannot participate competently in instructional activity primarily because she does not understand what is going on and cannot communicate with the teachers and others in the classroom.

A major issue in the literature in the United States is the function of the native language in the educational process. Supporters of the *transitional* model believe in

the primacy of English, using the native language as a medium of instruction only until the point where the students have acquired competent skills in English. Advocates of the *maintenance* model uphold the long-term use of the L_1 (native language) and the right of students to maintain their native language and culture. Still others favor the *enrichment* model in which the opportunity of becoming bilingual is also open to English-speaking students (Fishman, 1976; Mackey, 1972; Paulston, 1975).

In Brazil, however, two positions regarding the function of language run throughout the literature. One position holds that the native language should be used for development of first language skills, whereas the other holds that Portuguese should be the medium of instruction. Supporters of the former position point out both a technical rationale (developing full proficiency in the L_1 promotes the same in the L_2, because the L_1 reading skills are easily transferred to the L_2) and a political rationale (developing literacy in the L_1 is a way of preserving indigenous languages and cultures, and it is the right of everybody to be literate in their own language). They favor the language maintenance model, arguing against the assimilationist character of the transitional model as the appropriate mode for a society which recognizes and accepts cultural pluralism and desires democracy.

Advocates of the latter position hold that literacy should be achieved in Brazilian Portuguese, making use of arguments provided by Indians that they do not need the written code because their own cultures are orally-based. However they need to learn Portuguese as it is a defensive tool in their contact with the national society. In this case, the main issue concerns the variety of Brazilian Portuguese that is to be used in learning to read and write (the standard, the one spoken by Indians, or the local variety).

After reading these teachers' reports a couple of points become clear. Numerous teachers, in theory, shared the conviction that the use of the native language is necessary for the technical and political reasons mentioned above. In practice not only were most of these programs developed and implemented under precarious conditions, but other factors contributed toward the choice of Brazilian Portuguese as the medium of instruction. Among the main difficulties mentioned were: the recognition that they did not know much of the native language, the lack of research in indigenous languages, the lack of linguistic theory to accompany the practical materials developed by teachers in the indigenous communities, the high level of multilingualism of some groups, and the resistance of some indigenous groups.

Out of twelve reports that discussed problems involving language choice as medium of instruction, five stated that they used Brazilian Portuguese as the only medium of instruction (Guimarães, Lea, Ladeira, Oliveira and Diniz, Pereira). Out of the seven reports that favored the use of the L_1, two fell into the transitional model (de Paula and de Paula, do Nascimento) in which students during the first two years learn the native language as a first step towards making the transition to Brazilian Portuguese. The other five reports favored a language maintenance model. Some of these reports will be discussed in detail below.

Do Nascimento's report is a typical example of the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) during the 1970s, in which bilingual education programs were developed for several indigenous groups using the native language as the medium of instruction. SIL's overall project was translating the Bible into indigenous languages and then helping the native speakers of those languages to become literate, so that they could read the Bible in their own language. Today it is generally accepted that the SIL work was assimilationist, having conversion as its main goal (Meliá, 1979; Orlandi, 1983a,b,c, 1985; Rodrigues, 1988).

De Paula and de Paula, although supporters of the language maintenance model, ended up using the transitional model. They mention that they started with the L_1 but they had to stop because of their lack of vocabulary and the problems they were having with syllabic structure and spelling in the indigenous language.

The other five attempted to implement a language maintenance model (Altmann and Zwetsch, Amarante, Azevedo, da Mota, Ferreira) in the sense that they recognized the importance of keeping both the L_1 and L_2 as media of instruction. Whereas Altmann and Zwetsch, and Azevedo introduced both languages from the beginning, Amarante, da Mota, and Ferreira developed programs which were comprised of two phases starting with the L_2 and later introducing the L_1. Amarante mentioned that she started with Brazilian Portuguese and later introduced the L_1 after having evaluated some problems that arose in the first phase of the program, including the exclusive use of Brazilian Portuguese.

As a matter of fact, even the teachers who used only Brazilian Portuguese as medium of instruction (Guimarães, Ladeira, Lea, Oliveira and Diniz) unanimously stated having used the L_1 during the process of early literacy instruction as bilingualism was spontaneous and learners created words in their native language which in turn helped them (the teachers) to develop their own knowledge of the indigenous language. However, they could not go further because their knowledge of the indigenous language was very low.

Amarante pointed out that in the case of the Iranxe group, the introduction of the L_1 was problematic because of certain cultural patterns which vary according to age and sex factors. Most women were not Iranxe (due to exogamic marriages) and they did not speak the language. Because most children were primarily in contact with women, they did not speak Iranxe either. But whereas boys learn it through contact with Iranxe men later during initiation, there is no functional need for the girls to learn it. Therefore the girls have to learn both spoken and written Iranxe in school while the boys do not. On the other hand, Lea (1981) in her work with Txukarramãe Indians in the National Park of High Xingu mentioned that despite the fact that Brazilian Portuguese was the lingua franca there, restricting the use of Portuguese for literacy training to men was inevitable, as most women did not speak Portuguese. Moreover, women did not have an active role in the external social activities of the group which would in turn lead them to interact with non-Indians.

Judging from these studies, there is no consensus about the issue of language choice except for the fact that the choice should be made according to the specifics of each situation. The reports ask for detailed analysis of linguistic situations and the needs resulting from the contact with the national society as well as the motivation and attitude of the specific group to be taught.

The information drawn out of these reports leads one to the conclusion that when carried out in practice, bilingual education in Brazil is either transitional, in which the native language is used as a bridge to Brazilian Portuguese (cf. de Paula and de Paula, do Nascimento, and the work developed by the SIL), or it has been intermingled with the process of *alfabetização* (literacy) itself in which both languages are used simultaneously but restricted to a short period of time. As researchers have argued, one of the components of successful bilingual programs (understood to be the language maintenance model) is that the program should be long enough to provide for a solid linguistic foundation in the L_1, promoting cultural maintenance (Hakuta and Snow, 1986; Troike, 1986).

What all these alternative programs had in common was an effort to intervene in the social problems of indigenous peoples. The authors of these reports believe that education for Indians in which use of the L_1 would be one of the components is strengthening them against the disruptive forces imposed by the contact situation. Education was not to be reduced to school and school to literacy instruction, but it would take up on Freire's (1976) theories which see literacy development as a critical, mobile process through which habits of resignation and conformity are overcome.

Freire has distinguished between a 'naive,' magical, unreflective stage in which man doesn't confront the world around him and a 'critical' vision of this world. He wanted to reform the illiterates' perspective on reality, which has usually been of a profound pessimism and fatalism, by enabling them to gain awareness of their capacity to shape their environment. Accordingly, the teacher's main purpose in the process of *alfabetização* was to make Indians aware of their exploitation by the dominant society and provide them with the tools to fight for their rights. In this case, learning to read was not acquiring a mere technical skill, but acquiring values, formulating mentalities, and led to social and political consequences.

The Freire method (1976) was chosen by most of the teachers as it best fit their purposes to make the transition from the traditional school of the missionaries. In Freire's model the critical capacity of the learners develops out of dialogue about meaningful situations in their life. Both teacher and learners come into close association in a common purpose, seeking truth about relevant problems while respecting each other's opinions. To give one example, Oliveira and Diniz (1981) reported that the elaboration of the material they used in literacy development for adults was prepared jointly by the teacher and learners and distributed in six steps taking into account meaningful situations in the Indians' life. For example: readings of reports and documents about many indigenous groups in Acre, notes about the Indians' accounts of their customs, habits, and work tools, readings of pedagogical materials developed by anthropologists for other indigenous groups, key-words regarding the environment of the group to be taught organized according to their phonemic complexity, elaboration of 42 cards according to the Freire method were used.

The deeply contextual orientation of Freire's method led to basic themes regarding Indians' ways of life in the tribe as well as to problematic issues originating from contact with national society. The following learner's piece of writing (from Pereira, 1981) exemplifies the growing critical consciousness by Indian learners of their situation as exploited people:

Seringa

> No seringal tem pouco serigueiro porque o patrão paga pouco pela borracha e a mercadoria no barracão é cara O seringueiro fica sempre devendo para o patrão. Ele nunca tira saldo. O seringueiro fica sempre mais pobre. Só o patrão é quem ganha com a safra da borracha.
>
> Para o seringueiro não falta o que comer se ele tem criação e o roçado.

Rubbertree

> In the *seringal* (a place where rubber is collected) there are few *seringueiro* (rubber tappers) because the boss pays little for the rubber and goods in the *barracão* (the place where workers buy goods they need) are expensive The *seringueiro* is always indebted to the boss. He never gets the credit. The *seringueiro* always gets poorer. It is only the boss who profits with the rubber crop.
>
> For the *seringueiro* if he raises some cows and owns a *roçado* (a small farm) there is no lack of food.

Accordingly, most of the literacy projects were developed along with projects for "cooperativas de produção e consumo," enterprises which operate for the benefit of those using their service, which intended to help Indians control their land and achieve economic independence. In other words, schools and cooperatives were part of the same process in which *conscientização* (conscientization) was to lead to political action whose aim was to achieve the total integration of the indigenous people into a new society under change. This vision of a new society shared by these educators portrayed the issue of a national Brazilian identity not as a conflict between two identities (one more superior than the other) but as a mutually enriching experience for both.

In support of cultural pluralism, these educators established as their goals: 1) the struggle against ethnic discrimination, 2) the redefinition of social and cultural consciousness of indigenous groups, and 3) the awakening of a critical awareness among indigenous groups of their specific class situation (a product of economic exploitation, political domination and cultural degradation).

The role and function of schooling

A major concern among teachers was the need to distinguish between Western modeled schools and Indian schools. At issue is the whole concept of education. How could one imagine an Indian school which would not destroy indigenous culture and tradition? The first distinction to take into account grew out of the whole concept of education. Education within indigenous communities is continuous and multiple (provided by several members of the communities), and learning does not require formal codes or establishment institutions as the traditional Western school does. Learning occurs by means of spontaneous games and imitation. Everyone learns from everyone else (Meliá, 1979). On the other hand, Western education requires formal and institutionalized codes. Its goal is generalization and homogeneity and the method used is inculcation. On this basis, the question of the role of school can be looked at three different ways.

First, there is a major concern on the part of the teachers in defining the role of the non-Indian educators in the indigenous areas. Teachers are aware of the contradictions and problems posed by the traditional Western school. As supporters of Freire, they have rejected the authoritarian speech of the traditional school viewed as ideologically bound to the dominant ethnic group. Instead, they consider education as a series of processes and activities carried out along with Indians, leading them to a critical understanding of reality, that is, the contact situation.

Second, in an attempt not to reproduce a traditional Western school several teachers make the point that there is no need to have a separate space for school (de Paula and de Paula, Guimarães, Lea) as is the case in traditional Western schooling. They claim that classes should be taught in the *aldeias* (villages) so that school could be entirely integrated with Indians' daily activities without disrupting them. Classes should not be taught, for example, whenever children were travelling with parents, fishing or attending community activities. Frequency should be a question of personal motivation and be supported by community leaders. Accordingly, several reports (da Mota, Guimarães, Lea) discuss the use of indigenous myths as a motivation for oral work. Others (de Paula and de Paula, Ladeira) point out that the technical difference between the way certain Indians do handicrafts (right to left) and write (left to right) should be taken into account. De Paula and de Paula also suggest that school and literacy programs should be introduced only during adolescence when indigenous processes of socialization have been mostly completed. All in all, the main aim expressed in the reports is to design a type of school which does not work against the Indians' traditional process of socialization and in which writing is related to other handicraft skills.

Finally, the preparation of bilingual indigenous monitors constitutes another component of the process of 'nativization.' The teachers assert that the communities themselves should assume responsibility for literacy development as it is the Indian monitor who lives in the *aldeia* and best knows his or her culture and language. School is to be controlled by Indians themselves.

These three aspects reflect a major function of school in indigenous communities posed by these educators, which is to break up the authoritarian discourse characteristic of the traditional school in which the White teacher is the only source of knowledge. The new school is a tool for reflection and *conscientização* (conscientization) of the relationship between Indians and non-Indians (Altmann and Zwetsch, da Mota, Oliveira and Diniz, Guimarães). The new school is the search for autonomy (in Freire's terminology education is the practice of freedom) in which

teachers and Indians construct a critical interpretation of the contact situation through transactions with each other.

Nevertheless, it is interesting that while teachers view the classroom dialogue activity as an important step in building up *conscientização*, some indigenous groups view it as a waste of time (Gnerre, 1985). Several teachers reported that some groups wanted to start writing and reading activities (mostly copying) immediately. Also, while teachers wanted to give classes in the *aldeias*, Indians sometimes want a special building for school as a separate site from the community life. Hornberger (1987) pointed out when analyzing two Quechua-speaking communities of Puno, Peru, that the school, from the point of view of community members, has historically been and should continue to be a non-Quechua site within the community. While teachers were ready to accept absence of students, parents were worried when their children missed a class. The introduction and implementation of the non-traditional school was not easy and smooth, but met with resistance.

The need to listen to Indians' concerns

This third theme is related to the previous ones, that is, Indian Schools should be designed through consultations with the target population to discover their needs. What did the Indians want from literacy? What kind of school did they want? What language was to be preferred in the process of literacy? What were the difficulties posed by institutionalized schools? These were some of the teachers' questions. The teachers proposed schools which would not interfere with cultural patterns in the indigenous communities (favoring the L_1, not having a separate site for school, integrating school activities to their way of life, etc.).

Out of the twelve reports only one is by an Indian, Daniel Matenho Cabixi, titled *"Educação para o grupo Pareci"* (Education for the Pareci group). Cabixi criticizes the schools of the past (board schools run by missionaries in the 1950s, regular schools in the 1960s and 1970s) which never took into account the Indians' cultural values nor ever paid attention to the socio-economic and political crisis resulting from the contact situation. At present, Indians feel the need to have a school for themselves and their children. However, Cabixi states that because of their dependency they still desire the model school they have been accustomed to. He calls for an education which breaks up the path of dependency on national society in which Indians should be enabled to transform themselves and their social environment. In order to succeed they need to have technical and intellectual preparation, and organize themselves and struggle for their rights.

Cabixi recognizes that dispersion of the group, lack of people with experience, lack of funds and pedagogical material specific to the group are some of the major problems. On the other hand, he is critical of anthropologists and linguists who do not engage in the Indians' cause, but just take advantage of their condition to improve their status as researchers, and he is critical of educators who have been working with Indians claiming themselves to be *'conscientizadores,'* supporters of conscientization, but who are merely observers of a deteriorating situation.

Though Cabixi is an Indian, he refers to himself as an outsider. He received a mainstream education in the national university system and has been back in the Pareci community for nine years. He has not learned the native language of the Pareci, making it very difficult for him to understand the true feelings of the Pareci Indians or convey his knowledge to them. Is Cabixi speaking from an Indian point of view? That is very hard to say.

Much of the emphasis in the teachers' reports points towards a language maintenance program. This is demonstrated by their goals, such as the enabling of Indians to a) gain self-determination and responsibility for their own socio-economic development, and b) raise their tribal ethos so that they can maintain their own culture and traditions. Such a bilingual-bicultural program has as a goal the enabling of the indigenous communities to take upon themselves responsibility for their own literacy development.

A critical issue: are we keeping the difference?

The question, "is there bilingual education in Brazil?" has two answers: yes and no. The positive answer refers to the fact that bilingual education is the subject of some scholars' academic discussions (see Meliá, 1979; and UNICAMP, 1983) and the aim of a few projects developed through the enthusiasm and hard work of a few individuals (cf. the alternative programs described above). The negative answer refers to the fact that there is no *publicly-sponsored* bilingual education for Indians in Brazil nor any experimental bilingual projects at a national level. Rather, bilingual education is restricted to individual efforts, and most of these projects, if put into practice, have been interrupted.

A second question, "what kind of bilingual education programs have been developed?" is best answered through the vantage point of two major philosophical orientations, assimilative and pluralistic, which underlie the issue of linguistic diversity, bilingual education, and language policy in the U.S. and around the world (Wolfson, 1988).

The situation in Brazil is not too different from other countries. On the one hand, there are proponents of assimilation who hold that Brazil is a Portuguese-speaking country and that schools should be responsible for assimilating diverse linguistic groups into mainstream language and culture. On the other hand, the opponents of this view hold that Brazil is a pluralistic nation and that the government must protect the rights of minority groups in order to maintain diverse languages and cultures.

Looking at the history of contact between Indians and the national society, the language policy that has been carried out by the government and the recurrent themes discussed above, two trajectories may be identified concerning the assimilationist and the pluralistic viewpoints, one taken by government agencies (GA), such as FUNAI, and another by alternative programs (AP) such as those described above.

Across the centuries up through the late 1960s assimilation was a common goal of the government language policy and the school agents (SIL missionaries and indigenists). The only difference was that while regular public schools offered submersion programs, the missionaries, aiming at conversion, used transitional programs.

But since the 1960s, there has been a change in orientation towards a recognition of linguistic diversity and self determination. Taking Ruiz's (1984) three categories of language policy orientation (language-as-problem, language-as-right, language-as-resource), there has been a move away from language-as-problem towards language-as-right on the part of GAs and APs.[4] Nevertheless, there is a big difference between the two. Whereas GAs have not reinforced the Presidential Acts (whenever FUNAI schools used the first language as medium of instruction it was only for a short period as a bridge towards the L_2), APs have attempted to do so.

There has been a historical mismatch between GAs and APs. Whereas APs seem to keep moving towards a language-as-resource orientation, GAs are stuck with language-as-problem. The teachers described above desired Indians' empowerment and control regarding schooling. These teachers wanted to be mediators in the Indians' process of becoming critically aware. Furthermore, learning was supposed to be a two-way process and the teachers would expand their knowledge about the indigenous languages. (de Paula and de Paula).

However, if we take a close look at the teachers' reports, one has a feeling that despite all their good intentions, they have missed the point. These 'progressives,' though favoring pluralism and diversity, have ended up favoring an assimilationist

orientation. How has this been so? First, throughout the teachers' reports and their discussions about the role of school and literacy, nothing is said about the introduction of literacy into a non-literate society, or about the different strategies inherent in oral and written modes of language use.

The terms *non-literate* and *literate* as well as *oral mode* and *written mode* do not represent a dichotomy but places on a continuum. On this basis, other absolutes such as good and bad, or superior and inferior, do not apply. Researchers have shown that differences among groups either in discourse (Heath, 1982; Michaels, 1981) or in participant structures (Philips, 1983) are not found so much along the great divide of oral vs. literate cultures, but in the gap between decontextualized information present in a mainstream classroom and the native, oral code used for organizing and conveying information in non-mainstream homes (See Hornberger, 1988, for a comprehensive discussion of the concept of continuum in the biliteracy, literacy and bilingualism literatures).

I am not questioning the value of literacy. I do not believe that it is possible for an indigenous group or any group thrust into a technological world to isolate themselves from the influence of literacy and exist as a 'pure' culture. Culture is not static. The point to make is that the process of moving from oral traditions to the written word is a process of language reduction whenever oral forms are translated into written form, a process which has historically been Western-shaped. By using the Freire approach, which has been designed for syllabic languages such as Portuguese and Spanish, these teachers have transposed a structure of syllabic languages onto languages which may have different syllabic structures or may even be non-syllabic. It was not by chance that de Paula and de Paula reported that they could not continue their work with the L_1 as a medium of instruction; they noted that they were having trouble with words whose syllabic structure was different from Portuguese.

Accordingly, Gnerre (1985) has pointed out that it is naive to think that it is useful to translate school texts, which are the result of a specific historical and linguistic tradition, from Western languages to indigenous languages. He says that although writing in a native language or using it as a medium of instruction has been a crucial element in the process of ethnic maintenance for several indigenous groups, the assumption of this approach is that indigenous languages can convey the same information as the Western language. It is of crucial importance that educators begin to face the issues regarding the homogenization process inherent in using the Western written code. Following this same argument, Orlandi (1983c) has claimed

that the new approach launched by teachers aiming at language/culture maintenance turns out to be assimilationist and ethnocentric, as they have not made a distinction between their concept of language (Western-oriented) and what would be the Indians' relationship with language.

While Gnerre focuses on the problems and consequences of the introduction of literacy to a pre-literate society, Orlandi draws on a typology of discourse to make the point that the conflict between authoritarian and critical discourses is part of the Western experience with teaching/learning in formal schools. Understanding this conflict does not mean that authoritarianism is taken away, but that it may take the shape of paternalism. According to Orlandi (1983a) the bottom line of the "listen to Indians" approach turns out to be "listen to Indians in order to modify them according to the Western-oriented model: the literate adult" (Orlandi 1983a: 128). Orlandi (1983a) presents the situation where Indians who have been in a contact situation are "listened to" but still ask for a traditional Western school. Orlandi suggests that providing a Western school for these Indians would not mean reproducing an unequal or inappropriate situation. A critical posture would show the Western school as it really is with its contradictions and leave an opening for Indians to elaborate their own experience with it, if they wish.

On this basis, the most important contribution Orlandi makes is her redefinition of the "listen to Indians approach." According to her, listening to Indians means to focus on the Indians' relationship with language by recognizing and accepting that they are active learners who are able to pose questions to themselves as well as use their own hypotheses or methodologies to answer questions.

Along these lines, the language maintenance model implemented by alternative programs which appears at first to have a pluralistic intention, turns out to be only pseudo-pluralistic. A true pluralistic approach would encompass, accept and maintain difference as a way of modifying or making Westerners re-evaluate the concepts they work with. It is a language-as-resource orientation which offers this true pluralistic perspective and which would lead us to abandon the 'understanding' position reflected in the acceptance of conflict/difference in the maintenance model. Perhaps it would encourage an empowering, enriching environment for people to practice the freedoms and the plurality of meanings that language and life offer.

Ethnocide, meaning the destruction of a culture, is a historical constant not only in Brazil, but wherever one culture dominates another. Otherwise, why should we need to bother about language maintenance or enrichment programs? Otherwise,

why should linguists be bothered to come to Brazil to teach Indians how to read and write in their native language? Otherwise, why has the discourse of 'self-determination,' 'empowerment,' 'political organization,' 'maintenance of difference,' 'resistance,' 'consciousness,' etc. been incorporated into Indians' discourse? Finally, (bi)literacy and empowerment is not something *given* to others. We cannot empower others. Instead, both empowerment and literacy are complex interactional processes which are personally and culturally shaped. They are a function of relationships and contexts.

Empowerment is a developmental process. Teachers must be patient and recognize the limits of classrooms for achieving empowerment. Hornberger (1987) has made the point that a societal context in which primary incentives exist for the use of one, two, or multiple languages and the autonomy of the speech community in deciding about use of languages in their schools are essential for successful language maintenance planning. Certainly in Brazil the case has been one of the absence of both these prerequisites across the centuries and despite "all good intentions" we still think that the literate elite of Western societies is or should be the model.

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[1] This paper was originally written for a class on bilingual education taught by Dr. Nancy Hornberger at the University of Pennsylvania. The author is very grateful to Maria Inês Pagliarini Cox, who offered her helpful insights on the subject of this paper, and to Dr. Nancy Hornberger, who provided helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. However, mistakes remain the author's own.

[2] Franchetto and Leite (1983) reported at the Thirteenth Brazilian Meeting of Anthropology in 1982 that when several academic researchers were asked by what means they started to work with indigenous languages, they responded that is was by chance. Information about indigenous languages/cultures was not provided before students had reached undergraduate and graduate courses or studied abroad. Also, Rodrigues (1983, 1988) has called attention to the fact that linguistic diversity is ignored by most of the population who take it as something old-fashioned which should be eradicated. IBGE, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, does not include in its national census questions about which languages are spoken by the population. This lack of information about reality has political and linguistic consequences, such as: the Ministry of Education has never had interpreter service or a section that looks at the education of minority language groups.

[3] The major supporters of alternative programs are the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro, the University of Campinas (UNICAMP) in São Paulo and the Council of Indigenists and Missionaries (CIMI) in Brasília.

[4] *Language-as-problem* - an orientation which has as its status-planning goal the eradication of a minority language. Its corpus-planning goal focuses on

standardization. When implemented it favors transitional bilingual education. *Language-as-right* - An orientation with the status-planning goal of recognition of the rights of communities to maintain their language. Its corpus planning goal includes graphization of minority languages. When implemented it favors maintenance bilingual education. *Language-as-resource* - An orientation with the status-planning goal of development and preservation of as many minority languages as possible. Its corpus planning goal considers the extension of the minority languages both lexically and sociolinguistically. When implemented it favors enrichment bilingual education and literacy training in the minority language (Hornberger, 1987:125).

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